

Discrimination Complaint

In USDA programs, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, familial status, disability, limited English proficiency, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from a public assistance program. In programs that receive Federal financial assistance from USDA, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, political beliefs, age, disability, national origin, or limited English proficiency. Reprisal is prohibited based on prior civil rights activity.

Eligibility requirements are the same for all persons in Michigan. You have a right to file a program discrimination complaint.

Any person or representative alleging discrimination based on a prohibited basis has the right to file a complaint within **180 days** of the alleged discriminatory action. Only the Secretary of Agriculture may extend this time under special circumstances. The complainant must be advised of confidentiality and Privacy Act applications. The complainant and the entity that the complaint is filed against will be encouraged to resolve the issue at

the lowest possible level and as expeditiously as possible.

Please follow the procedures outlined in this pamphlet to assure prompt response to your grievance and/or complaint.

Your complaint may be either written or verbal. If you wish to file a verbal complaint, please advise one of the agency staff persons.

To file a **program discrimination complaint** write a letter to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Director, Office of Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410

What do I need to include in my complaint letter?

Include the following in your complaint letter:

1. Your name, address and telephone number.
2. The name, address, and telephone number of your attorney or authorized representative, if you are represented.
3. The basis of your complaint. The basis is what you believe was the motivating factor for the discrimination. For example, you may believe you were treated

differently because of your race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, familial/parental status, disability, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from a public assistance program.

4. The date(s) that the incident(s) you are reporting as discrimination occurred. Please note that we cannot accept a complaint about an incident that took place more than 180 days prior to the filing of the complaint. If the discrimination occurred more than 180 days prior to filing your complaint, you may request a waiver of the filing requirement. (See waiver information below.)
5. The name of the individual(s) or entity you believe discriminated against you and the agency or recipient that employs that/those individual(s).
6. The issue(s) of your complaint. The issue is a description of what happened, or the action that was taken by the individual(s) or agency that discriminated against you, resulting in some harm. Explain as clearly as possible what happened,

why you believe it happened, and how you were discriminated against. Please include how other persons were treated differently from you, if applicable. If you were denied a benefit or service, please provide a copy of the denial letter. If you have documents to support the events you are reporting, provide a copy of the supporting documents.

If you choose, you may file a verbal complaint. A staff person from the lead agency will take your information and submit it to the USDA Office of Civil Rights on your behalf.

More information is available at:
<http://www.ascr.usda.gov>

Fair Hearing

If you feel you have been wrongly denied participation in Senior Project FRESH, you have a right to a fair hearing.

A fair hearing may be requested by the individual applicant, a caregiver, proxy, relative, or other representative.

The lead agency shall not limit or interfere with the individual's freedom to request a hearing.

A request for a fair hearing must be made within 60 days from the date the lead agency mails or gives the applicant the notice of adverse action.

To request a fair hearing:

Tell a lead agency staff person that you want a fair hearing. List the reasons you want a fair hearing.

You will be notified of the time, date and location of the hearing. You may bring anyone you wish with you.

An Impartial Hearing Officer will hear both sides of the case and make the decision. You will be notified in writing.

If you do not agree with the Fair Hearing decision, you have the right to take the matter to court.

Complaint Against a Lead Agency, Farmers Market or Roadside Stand

Please follow the steps listed above to file a complaint against a lead agency, farmers market, or roadside stand. A form is available for your convenience.



Michigan Senior Project FRESH

Participant Rights

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.